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## CURRENT OPINION

### About Nietzsche

English and American periodicals have made much of the influence of Nietzsche on German political ethics and ideals. In the *Review and Expositor* for January, 1915, President E. Y. Mullins, writing on "Nietzsche and His Doctrines," comments on this influence. Schopenhauer with his doctrine of the will and Darwin with his doctrine of the struggle for life exerted a powerful influence upon the development of Nietzsche's thought. He was an admirer of Wagner until the latter bowed to religious ideals in *Parsifal*, then he turned from art to science and became a positivist and later interpreted and transformed Schopenhauer's "will to live" in the light of Darwin's theory of the battle for existence, so that it became the "will to power." Although Nietzsche repudiated his predecessors, his connection with them is unmistakable. Dr. Mullins characterizes the doctrine of Nietzsche as anti-pessimistic, anti-religious, anti-Christian, anti-democratic, anti-socialistic, anti-feministic, anti-intellectualistic, anti-moral. The spiritual universe has no meaning for Nietzsche. His doctrine is the logical outcome of naturalism. It is unhuman, unhistorical. He is on the side of war in the literal sense when men destroy their fellow-men with rifle and steel; war in society when competition becomes absolutely selfish and crushes the weak and the unfit; war against sympathy and altruism. Nietzsche and Christ are at opposite poles. Dr. Mullins does not, however, tell us whether Nietzsche's influence upon German thought is as paramount as some would make it. However, it is quite possible that many who have never read his books are at one with him. Prominent thinkers and leaders are usually exponents of existing tendencies as well as creators of new ones in cases when they powerfully im-

press their age, as Dr. Mullins excellently says.

In the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1915, Dr. Griffith Thomas, writing on "Germany and the Bible," says that perhaps first of all in importance in its influence upon German thought is the philosophy of Nietzsche. Dr. Thomas shows how Nietzsche's philosophy was wildly anti-Christian. To him life was the will to power and Christianity a rallying-post for a conspiracy against life itself, a religion for the "herd." According to him, the German people were to be blamed for abandoning the old gods of their fathers under the influence of Christian missions from the fifth to the tenth century. It is to be remarked that Nietzsche's mental balance was doubtful and that after several periods of insanity he had at last to be placed in a lunatic asylum, where he remained for twelve years, and died in 1900.

In the same magazine Dr. James Lindsay contributes "A Critical Estimate of Nietzsche's Philosophy." It has been said that no one can think, and escape Nietzsche. His personality pervades his thinking and writing. He is poet rather than philosopher or psychologist, and he transmutes into thought some elementary instincts of man. He exalts hardness, he despises pity and mercy and compassion. Duty is left to slaves and fools. The production of the "overman" is the justification of an otherwise despicable mass of humanity. This "overman" would face life like "a laughing lion"; he would be morally "rough, stormy, relentless, hard, violently predatory." Spiritual care for the sick and the suffering and the weak made for the deterioration of the European race. Dr. Lindsay shows how this teaching tends toward stopping human progress of the higher type and confounds virility with brutality. However, one may

in Nietzsche, as in Schopenhauer, find elements of inspiring value.

A number of articles on Nietzsche have appeared of late. It seems that his influence has been exaggerated. In Germany, young students, perhaps more often women than men, are fascinated by him, but he has practically no influence on German thinkers, who declare emphatically that he is no philosopher. In foreign lands, however, he has had a great influence upon that very class of people which in Germany repudiates him. It may seem a paradox, but it has been maintained that in England he has had more influence than in Germany itself.

#### **Practicing Medicine on the Sabbath Day**

In the *Expositor* for January, 1915, Professor D. S. Margoliouth writes on "Healing on the Sabbath Day." In the Four Gospels, Jesus is attacked by the official leaders of Judaism because he "gave medical aid" on the Sabbath day. To give medical aid is indeed a better rendering of the word *therapeuein* than the word "heal" of our versions. The Mosaic legislation as interpreted by the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not prohibit a cure which would be effected by a fiat, for the simple reason that no law deals with the occurrence of the miraculous. In the narratives of healing in the Synoptics there is no mention of an operation whereby the Sabbath would be violated. This omission is supplied by the Fourth Gospel where two cases of healing on the Sabbath day are recorded (John 5:8; 9:6), when Sabbatic regulations are violated. The first of these cures is defended in John 7:22-24 by a syllogistic argument: men are circumcised on the Sabbath day that the law of Moses may not be broken. "Are ye wroth with me, adds Jesus, because I made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath?" (It would be better to translate: "because I made a whole man sound.")

Our Gospel narrative gives us only the premise and the conclusion of the syllogism, but we have the whole argument in an oral Jewish tradition ascribed to R. Eleazar B. Azariah in the Talmud. R. Eleazar says: circumcision supersedes the Sabbath; since circumcision is concerned with one of the 248 members of the body, it follows a fortiori that an operation which concerns the whole body must supersede Sabbatic regulations. If, as seems to be the case, the Gospels contain three layers, a Hebrew layer belonging to the first Christians of Palestine, a Syriac layer belonging to the second set of proselytes, and a Greek layer belonging to the churches founded by Paul and others, we shall be justified in assigning the preservation of an argument so like this rabbinical syllogism to the first Christian circles in Palestine.

#### **The Social Principle of Christianity**

The *Constructive Quarterly* for December, 1914, contains a study "On the Specific Genius and Capacities of Christianity, Studied in Connection with the Works of Professor Ernst Troeltsch," by Baron F. von Huegel. Troeltsch classifies the sociological scheme and action of Christianity in three types of religion—church, sect, and mysticism. The representative types are located by him: that of the church in the High Middle Ages, that of the sect, in the first instance immediately after, still in those Middle Ages, and that of mysticism after the Protestant churches and sects, for each of these types is then in most vivid contrast with the others. The mediaeval church strove after a unified Christian civilization. The church was the unfolding of the supernatural as an autonomous logical, religious, and ethical principle. Both the church-type and the sect-type lie in the consequence of the gospel, and only conjointly do they exhaust its sociological effect; we have on one side: givenness, object, divine institution (church); on the other side: activity,

subject, community (sect). Protestantism is a reduction of religion to what alone can be an object of faith, trust, disposition—the thought of God through Christ as the holy gracious will which forgives us our sins and thus lifts us to a higher life. Protestantism as such did not begin at the Reformation: it only became conscious of itself and organized.

### The Psalms in Christian Worship

In the *Expositor* for January, 1915, Professor Emery Barnes writes on "The Psalter as an Aid to Worship in the Twentieth Century." Corporate worship, to be real, must have its roots in individual piety, but by its nature it reaches out for communion with other hearts and with Nature itself, because an attempt to ascribe to the Creator and Redeemer *his due* is beyond the power of any individual. The Hebrews of early times considered worship as being primarily an approach to God, who was looked upon as the exalted and glorified chief of the tribe. Worship was joyous and unrestrained (Exod. 32:6). When God was so clearly understood to be the kinsman of his worshipers, they looked upon him as bound to sustain their blood-revenge and identified their enemies with his. Passages of the Psalms which embody this conception are no aid to worship, but on the contrary a hindrance. Although these few Psalms strike a false note in a Christian service, the Psalter as a whole stands foremost among books of worship. This is, in the first place, because it is concerned with the righteousness of God. Man is imitative: as he realizes that the righteousness of God puts him under the obligation to offer worship, he realizes that it calls upon him to be himself righteous. In the second place, the Psalter ascribes to God graciousness or goodness in his righteous care for the individual. It shows how this interest of God in man abides eternally. Dr. Barnes shows how the Psalter can be

misused by a thoughtless and mechanical repetition. Worship rises toward God on wings, one of which touches thought and the other labor. Thus the Psalter must be interpreted in the light of modern needs and thoughts.

### Mysticism and the Reality of Christ

It is well known that the essence of the teaching of Luther is justification by faith alone, *sola fide*, through the Word alone, *solo verbo*. This means that salvation is not the result of external work or sacrament, but only of the word of God received in faith. Dr. Loofs shows that this does not exhaust the significance of the terms *sola fide*, *solo verbo* in his study on "*Sola verbo*, Lutheranism and Mysticism," published in the *Constructive Quarterly* for December, 1914. Luther was opposed to enthusiasts who held to an immediate revelation of God to man. In our time mysticism is being praised in the most diverse quarters as the most efficient promoter of Christian unity. Mysticism is understood to be the essential element in all religions, and especially in the different forms of Christian experience. Mysticism would be the religion of the future because of its true universal character. Dr. Loofs, as a disciple of Ritschl, maintains that the Lutheran shibboleth *solo verbo* is a clear condemnation of the working principle of mysticism which is the belief and practice of a direct communication with God and illumination by him. Mysticism has a tendency toward pantheism. It considers the relation of God to the creature as ontological and projects it beyond time and space previous to all record of redemption. It rests, therefore, on conditions independent of Jesus Christ. This may explain why advanced thinkers are so much in sympathy with mysticism. They sometimes unconsciously, often consciously, recommend mysticism because it is independent of the historical factors that have been outgrown by modern thought.

Over against this Luther's appeal to the Word alone, *solo verbo*, asserts that without the historical revelation witnessed to by the Word we actually have no sufficient knowledge of God.

In this connection it is interesting to note the editorial notes of the *Expository Times* for January, 1915, where some remarks are made on the *Autobiography of Tagore*, the Hindu poet, founder of a sect. The introduction to that autobiography is written by Miss Evelyn Underhill, who claims that Tagore was a true mystic to be placed beside Madame Guyon and even the great St. Teresa. Now we find in Tagore a bitter hatred of Christianity. The editor of the *Expository Times* remarks that the relation of mysticism to Christ has not yet been faced by Christian mystics. Not even the Ritschlians have been able to compel the Christian mystics to look facts in the face and to see that the belief that no one comes to the Father but by Jesus Christ is a permanent and essential element of Christianity. Dr. MacGregor has shown in his lectures on *Christian Freedom* (the Baird Lecture for 1913) that when the Christian mystic forgets to be Christian, he is under the influence of Eastern speculation. But Christianity is of neither East nor West; it presents a living God and not a vanishing ethereal dream. The Christian mysticism of which St. Paul was the great originator and remains the best type gives the central

place to the image of the historical Jesus, the Son of Man.

### The Quagmire of Bahaism

In the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1915, Mr. Samuel Graham Wilson writes on "Bahaism an Anti-Christian System." Mr. Wilson has spent many years in contact with Bahais in Persia and has been a diligent student of Bahai publications. Bahais make the claim that their faith is not antagonistic to Christianity, and it is said that a certain number of church members both in England and in America are at the same time Bahai. Bahaism has been received with favor by such people as are always hankering after novelties, by loose believers in Christianity whose faith is pervaded with more or less conscious pantheism. (Mr. Wilson ranks among these friends of Bahaism R. J. Campbell of London, and Professor Cheyne, of Oxford.) Mr. Wilson shows that Bahaism is anti-Christian because it is based on the principle of Mohammedanism, that Christianity was a divine religion but that it has been corrupted, and that Islam is a better revelation. Abdul Baba exalts, for instance, Mohammed above Moses or Jesus. Some Bahais represent Baha to be Christ, others make Abdul Baha Abbas to be Christ come the second time. The church ought to be on the alert against this delusive doctrine based on inaccuracies both historical and philosophical.